

Topical team's papers are key to Summit deliberations

Discussions at the Conservation in Action Summit will revolve about working papers developed by four topical teams, composed of Refuge System employees, nongovernment partner organizations, Friends groups and volunteers. The teams have examined central questions that will confront the Refuge System in the next five to 15 years.

Additionally, summit participants will discuss the work of a fifth team, Leadership, during a presentation by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Deputy Director Marshall Jones. The Leadership Team was chaired by Conservation Planning & Policy Deputy Chief Barry Stieglitz and Deputy Refuge Chief Jim Kurth.

The four other teams and their leaders are:

Science Team, chaired by Chief of Information Technology and Management Ken Grannemann and Region 5 Refuge Chief Tony Leger, developed draft recommendations to improve the Refuge System's capacity to carry out

science-based management to protect the environmental health, biological integrity and biological diversity of refuges. Science-based management is critical for two reasons: it helps the

Refuge System better meet its mission, and it enables the USFWS to more effectively contribute to broader national and international conservation efforts. The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 recognizes the complexities of natural resource management on refuges and calls for integration of sound science in the Refuge System's management.

Wildlife Dependent Recreation Team, chaired by Visitor Services and



Allyson Rowell

Communications Chief Allyson Rowell and Region 7 Refuge Chief Todd Logan, noted that the Refuge Improvement Act directly relates compatible wildlife dependent recreation to the Refuge System's mission. The team also stressed that, by engaging Americans in quality outdoor wildlife recreation, they will find personal gratification, learn about wildlife and its habitat and, ultimately, become engaged in wildlife conservation. The team suggested that the Refuge System provide more quality hunting and fishing opportunities, wildlife observation and photography, environmental education and interpretation opportunities.

Wildlife and Habitat Team, chaired by Natural Resources Chief Tom Stewart and Region 2 Refuge Chief Dom Ciccone, focused on core issues that occupy the Refuge System - the land and resources conserved on behalf of future generations. The team has looked at the conservation and improvement of marine and estuarine resources, the control and eradication of invasive species, a variety of fire management issues, including the use of prescribed fire where it will benefit Refuge System resources, migratory bird conservation, the means to assure adequate water resources, and assistance in the recovery of endangered and threatened species through habitat management.

Strategic Growth Team, chaired by Chief of Realty A. Eric Alvarez and Region 4 Refuge Chief Jon Andrew, has delved into a nationally coordinated approach to prioritize lands to be conserved within the Refuge System in order to contribute to



Eric Alvarez

the conservation of entire ecosystems. The team has considered the financial, political, and organizational constraints impacting the Refuge System as well as how its conservation work will complement that of states and other federal agencies.



Welcome to the Summit!

Conservation in Action
SUMMIT



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

National Wildlife Refuge System Summit Update

Today's Agenda

- 1 p.m.** Opening Plenary
Robert Byrd Auditorium
- 1:10 p.m.** Introduction
Judge Craig Manson,
Assistant Secretary of the
Interior for Fish, Wildlife
and Parks
- 1:30 p.m.** The Honorable Gale
Norton, Secretary of the
Interior
Welcome and Keynote
- 2 p.m.** Lynn Greenwalt, Former
Director, U.S. Fish and
Wildlife Service and
Centennial Commission
member
"Where We Have Been and
Where Are We Going?"
- 3 p.m.** Robert Fischman, Indiana
University School of Law --
Bloomington
"The National Wildlife
Refuge System
Improvement Act"
- 3:30 p.m.** Summit Overview presented
by Executive Committee
- 7 p.m.** Evening Program
Special Announcement:
John Berry, National Fish
and Wildlife Foundation
Roosevelt Room

"Participants will concentrate on identifying actionable goals during the Conservation in Action Summit as we work to formulate a strong, shared sense of priorities for the Refuge System."

-- Refuge System Chief
Bill Hartwig

The Summit: A pivotal meeting of many minds

Agreeing on measurable priorities for the next five to 15 years

Welcome to the Conservation in Action Summit, where approximately 250 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees and representatives of partner organizations, state agencies, nonprofit refuge Friends groups and others will identify measurable priorities to guide the Refuge System for the next five to 15 years.

"This is one of the most important gatherings in the history of the National Wildlife Refuge System," said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Steve Williams. "I greatly appreciate the fact that so many people have taken time from their schedules to come and help us build a strong future for the Refuge System."

"I am heartened to see representatives from so many states, community groups, local conservation organizations and Friends groups," Williams continued. "I especially want to thank Evan Hirsche, president of the National Wildlife Refuge Association, and Bob Byrne of the Wildlife Management Institute, who served as the executive committee of this summit with our own Deputy Chief of the Refuge System, Jim Kurth."

"This summit is a pivotal step on the path we blazed in Keystone, CO, when we formulated our *Fulfilling the Promise* vision," said Refuge System Chief Bill Hartwig. "The decisions we make at this summit, and the information we gather, will be



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used to guide our next steps down that path. They will be used by CARE (Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement) to inform the public and Congressional leaders about the direction of the Refuge System. What we do here makes a huge difference."

A Huge Opportunity

"The summit is a great opportunity to develop a focused view of where the Refuge System is headed in light of the Refuge Improvement Act and today's tough budgetary climate," noted Bob Byrne of the Wildlife Management Institute.

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Breakout sessions: First step to consensus on priorities

The first steps toward identifying shared priorities at the Conservation in Action Summit will be taken during breakout sessions Tuesday and Wednesday, when each participant can voice opinions on four topics: wildlife and habitat, wildlife dependent recreation, strategic growth and science - thoroughly analyzed by teams, whose working papers are the basis of discussions at the summit.

Each breakout session, focused on one topic area and limited to approximately 60 people, will start with a 10-minute team leader presentation, which outlines the findings and ideas contained in the working paper. The breakout group will have an opportunity to analyze the team's findings and add priorities to those identified by the team.

Every summit participant will join a breakout session on each topic area.

After the team leader's presentation, breakout participants will be split into smaller working groups. Participants will select their working group based on which of the team's identified priorities, or goals, they consider most important. Groups must be comprised of at least five people to be considered "viable" by the consultant/facilitator in the room. Groups with more than 12 may be subdivided.

Each working group will be assigned a team member to serve as an information resource and provide guidance about the team's deliberations, the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act and other information. The working group will then

develop a list of up to three action items they believe will improve the topic's status. Each working group's decisions will be presented to the full breakout session.

After all breakout sessions have been concluded by late Wednesday afternoon, the consultants/facilitators will develop a ballot listing all priorities and action items identified during the breakout sessions.

At the plenary session Wednesday afternoon, summit attendees will vote on which priorities and action items are most important. The summit executive committee will present the results Thursday during the "Wrap it Up" session.



Summit attendees will hear from a variety of speakers

An array of speakers will address summit participants, beginning today with Interior Secretary Gale Norton, who will open the conference with a keynote welcome address at 1:20 p.m.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Steve Williams will close the conference with his personal call to action on Thursday, May 27.

In between will be more than a dozen speakers ranging from a refuge manager; a representative of a Friends organization; a member of the Centennial Commission and former director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and a law professor. Refuge System Chief Bill Hartwig will present his challenges for the next century in a presentation Tuesday at 8 a.m.

Former Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Lynn Greenwalt, a member of the Centennial Commission, will speak on "Where We Have Been and Where We Are Going," today at 1:40 p.m. Greenwalt worked on refuges in Utah, Oklahoma, and New Mexico and regional offices in New Mexico, Oregon, and Minnesota.

Indiana University--Bloomington law professor Robert Fischman will speak on "The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act" today at 3 p.m.

Rollin Sparrowe, president emeritus of Wildlife Management Institute will discuss "Working Together for the Next Century of Conservation -- A Shared Sense of Priorities" Tuesday at 11 a.m.

The president of Friends of Black Bayou, Inc., Ann Smith, will provide "A Friend's Perspective" Wednesday at 8 a.m.

Also on Wednesday, Dr. Michael Suk, White House Fellow to the Department of the Interior will address "Refuges and Recreation for a Healthier US" at 4 p.m.

Refuge Manager Robin West will provide "A Refuge Manager's Perspective" Thursday at 8:30 a.m. West is the manager of the Kenai NWR, AK -- one of the nation's most visited refuges.



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"The teams have done an admirable job of capturing the most pressing issues and most vexing challenges facing refuges." -- Refuge System Chief Bill Hartwig (Dick Cole/USFWS)



"Most of us are so overwhelmed with competing tasks and requirements, that we rarely have a chance to step back and evaluate what constitutes a priority." -- National Wildlife Refuge Association President Evan Hirsche (Dick Cole/USFWS)

The Summit (cont'd from p. 1)

"Not only will the summit identify specific priorities -- and obstacles -- to getting core missions accomplished," noted Byrne, "but it will also give CARE an opportunity to identify the Refuge System's needs and explain those needs to Congress."

"Most of us are so overwhelmed with competing tasks and requirements, that we rarely have a chance to step back and evaluate what constitutes a priority," noted Hirsche. "The summit brings together a diverse group of partners with Fish and Wildlife Service employees who, aligned in support of a few, well-defined priorities, will be able to make a significant difference for the Refuge System."

History of the Summit

Planning for the summit began in August 2003, when conservation partners and representatives of the Refuge System and Friends groups gathered for a brainstorming session

in Washington, DC, to identify the most pressing issues.

The groups agreed that the Refuge System faced challenges in four areas: wildlife and habitat, wildlife dependent recreation, science and strategic growth. The three-member executive committee - Hirsche, Byrne and Kurth - named a Refuge System division chief and a regional chief to co-chair each team, assigned to assemble information and identify potential actions.

The co-chairs, in turn, selected USFWS field personnel and members of conservation organizations and Friends groups to serve on the teams, whose working papers form the basis for vibrant discussions during the summit. The teams have spent months culling information and viewpoints from relevant organizations.

Additionally, more than 500 USFWS employees participated in six Web chats during the months leading up to the summit, providing comments on the teams' working papers and identifying issues they confront daily.

The executive committee reviewed the working papers and produced an Executive Committee Report to summarize the findings and better focus discussions at summit.

"The teams have done an admirable job of capturing the most pressing issues and most vexing challenges facing refuges," concluded Hartwig. "Now, participants must concentrate on identifying actionable goals during the summit as we work to formulate a strong, shared sense of priorities for the Refuge System."

